



## The Review Process

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Each paper must receive a minimum of 3 reviews, and is assigned to at least 4 reviewers. The committee makes recommendations to TRB for acceptance, revision or rejection. Reviewers shouldn't be from the same agency as authors and it is a semi-blind review in that the authors will not know who reviewed their paper, but the reviewers do see the authors' names.. Typically about one half or so of the papers submitted are recommended for presentation and only 22% (as set by TRB) of papers submitted for publication can be recommended for publication. The inside cover of TRB's Transportation Research Record journal gives information about the process used to select papers as well.

The committee takes the process of review extremely seriously. We try to match the papers received to the specific interests and skills of the committee members and friends who are assigned reviews. Matching papers one-by-one to the interests and skills of the individual reviewers makes it more interesting to reviewers, and thereby helps to maximize the number of reviews that actually get done. Time spent on one-to one personal matching also serves to have as many good and credible reviews as possible in order to maximize the objectivity of the evaluation. The process, from receipt of papers, to assignment, to reviews, to decision, must take place in just over a single month. TRB has strict procedures and deadlines for decisions and it is vital to get a good set of credible reviews for each paper.

The results of the paper reviews can be difficult to deal with. Roughly one third of the papers are clearly not good enough and easy to eliminate, while typically a bit less than a third receive good reviews leading to obvious acceptance. The papers that fall in the middle area represent a significant challenge by receiving mixed reviews and scores, sometimes with diametrically opposite opinions from different respected reviewers; these papers make for difficult decisions.

To deal with these difficult papers, the following factors are taken into consideration:

- Scores both overall weighted score and score specifically for presentations, (which the authors do not see),
- Reviewers, including the number of reviewers, knowledge of the reviewers in terms of their skills, interests, and known biases, and the quality of what they have provided in the past,
- Comments from the reviewers, including those comments that authors see and those that they don't,
- Divergence between comments and scores (more common than one would think),
- The paper review chair's personal judgment on the degree of innovation of the paper topic or technique,

- 91       • The topic itself, in terms of its interest to the committee, and possible  
92       value to include, despite mixed scores and reviews, etc.  
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94 All this becomes difficult because papers have been trending away from the  
95 balance that we traditionally have had between analytic and practitioner-oriented  
96 papers. The committee has needed to draw on a wider set of reviewers from  
97 different backgrounds in order to get enough reviews to make decisions.

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